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Cease-Fire Developments

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Cease-Fire Developments

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CAMBODIA

The Military Situation

Government forces are meeting only light resistance as they continue to expand their control over the east bank of the Mekong River opposite Phnom Penh. Other Cambodian units trying to clear the river's east bank below Neak Luong are running into more determined opposition. Meanwhile, there continue to be indications that the Khmer Communists plan to keep up their pressure against Phnom Penh. A Communist official in the capital area has stated that insurgent troops are reconnoitering the city's northern and eastern outskirts in preparation for more rocket attacks.

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Elsewhere, the Communists have renewed their shelling of the southern provincial capital at Takeo after a two-day stand-down. To the west, the Communists are stepping up their attacks on government defensive positions around the village of Tram Khnar on Route 3.

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Political Procrastination

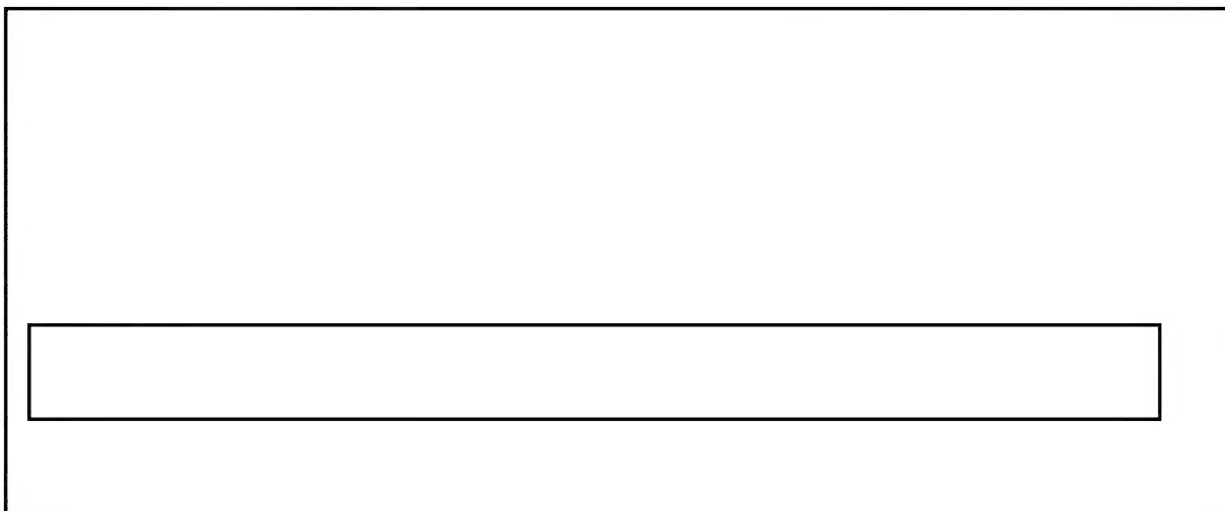
there may be some delay in installing a new cabinet. According to the Republican Party leader, the High Political Council has not yet even begun to discuss the various people put forth for cabinet positions.

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LAOSThe Military Situation

several Communist anti-aircraft guns were being moved from positions on the northern Plaine des Jarres. Later in the month, two guns were noted being hauled east on Route 7 toward the North Vietnamese border.

More evidence is needed to determine if the recent movement is the first phase of a general withdrawal of anti-aircraft or whether some units are simply taking part in a normal return to North Vietnam for the rainy season.

No Headway in Negotiations

Pathet Lao and government representatives have made no headway in their initial negotiating sessions regarding the implementation of the Lao peace agreement. Senior Lao Communist envoy Phoumi Vongrichit, who last week returned from lengthy consultations in Sam Neua, reportedly again presented several demands that had stalled earlier talks.

Despite the signs of continued impasse, an agreement could come on relatively short notice, however. Talks leading to the Laos agreement in February also appeared stalled until Souvanna in secret talks with the Communists, worked out an agreement that he presented as a fait accompli to his cabinet. Once again, Souvanna and his trusted subordinate Pheng Phongsavan are now taking personal charge of the negotiations. In typical fashion, the Prime Minister seems prepared to proceed with little regard to the views of the right wing.

In any case, further delay in reaching agreement could hinge as much on North Vietnamese timing as on differences between the Lao parties. Based on his discussions with Phoumi, Pheng Phongsavan has the impression that Hanoi is still linking movement in the negotiations to progress on the resolution of cease-fire problems in Vietnam and on movement toward a solution in Cambodia.

Lao Communist Delegation in East Europe

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The second-ranked Lao Communist leader, Nouthak Phoumsavan, and his delegation arrived in East Berlin on 2 May. Nouthak and his party began their tour of Communist capitals on 13 April and have already visited Hanoi, Peking, and Pyongyang. Aid agreements will probably be discussed in Berlin. Nouthak can be expected to pay official visits to Moscow and other East European capitals before returning home.

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SOUTH VIETNAMCOSVN Allegedly Reaffirms Strategy of Political Struggle

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[REDACTED] COSVN has concluded that its strategy of political struggle put forth in February is working and remains valid.

This portrayal may have been put forth in part to quiet the grumblings of old-line Viet Cong officials, some of whom have been contending that military action would bring a Communist victory a lot faster than sticking to political action under the cease-fire agreement. The COSVN spokesman reportedly admonished the conference to keep in mind that the agreement gains time for the Communists to "rally and build their forces" in order to defeat the government politically or, if eventually necessary, militarily. The spokesman said the political struggle would have priority for an "indefinite period in the future" and that military operations must be in support of political action.

In rebuttal to complaints from the conferees about the "slow process" of the political route, the COSVN spokesman alleged that, even before the spring offensive last year, COSVN had recognized that the Viet Cong would face "insurmountable difficulties" in keeping the war going, especially in finding the necessary manpower and resources. Implying pressure on Hanoi from its Communist allies, he claimed that the party had "managed to obtain renewed support" from friendly countries by giving assurances that the cease-fire agreement would be observed.

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